

Used Bike Guide

KAWASAKI ZX-6R

A lot has happened since 2005, but the C1 ZX-6R was so far ahead of its time it still feels brilliant today – especially at this price

2005 was a vintage year for motorcycle production. The headlines belonged to the mind-blowing GSX-R1000. It moved the litre class on massively and finally gave us some fine control to go with the huge power they offered. Just as impressive, if not quite as dramatic, was the shot in the arm Kawasaki's new ZX-6R gave the middleweights. The '03/'04 machine was a riot, and very capable, but it lacked the finesse we were all getting a taste for. Enter the bike you see here, the still very easy on the eye C1.

After the hard edges of its



PRICE GUIDE: £3,499 - £4,100

Cheapest private: £3,650
2005, 9,000 miles, 10 month T&T, standard bike

Our choice private: £3,700
2006, 3,500 dry miles, FSH, like new, bargain

Cheapest dealer: £3,499
2006, 37,000 miles, black, fsh, 1 owner, Yoshi can

Our choice dealer: £3,800
2006, 3,700 miles, fsh, new tyres, T&T, top cond

Ex-demo: £4,100
2006, 37 miles only, mint condition, T&T, like new

predecessor, the flowing lines of the new machine were a welcome change, yet it remained unmistakably a 6R. The centrally mounted air intake astride two scowling headlights made sure of that. This was also the first middleweight that felt far more than just a poor man's 1000. Radial brakes and USD forks were already par for the course, but it was the extra effort, especially with regards to the choice of bolt-ons that raised it above the rest of its class. Petal discs, flush indicators and the very tidy rear-end were set off by black levers and those intriguing six spoke wheels.

Kawasaki hadn't been shy with the cash when it came to increasing performance, either. Extensive wind tunnel testing is what shaped those fairings. The sweet looks are a by-product of the lowest drag coefficient from pretty much any class at the time. It's like a .338 Lapua gently parting the air as it easily ▶



It's not all show, because the ZX-6R can go, too. Mega lean comes as standard



Nice arse. Kawasaki sculpted the Zed's rear end to near perfection

- First 110bhp 600
- Great road bike
- From £3,500

ENGINE	Type	636cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, Four
	Bore x Stroke	68 x 43.8mm
	Compression	12.9:1
	Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection, 38mm bodies
	Tested Power	110.9bhp @ 13,600rpm
CHASSIS	Tested Torque	62.3Nm @ 11,200rpm
	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	41mm inverted Showa fork, fully adjustable
	R Suspension	Monoshock, fully adjustable
	Front Brakes	Four-piston radial calipers, 300mm petals
DIMENSIONS	Rear Brakes	Single-piston caliper, 220mm disc
	Wheelbase	1390mm
	Seat Height	820mm
	Dry Weight	164Kg
	Fuel Capacity	17L
SPEED	0-60	3.39s
	0-100	6.74s
	0-140	14.12s
	Stg ¼ Mile	11.25s @ 128.71mph
	Standing Mile	29.45s @ 160.21mph
	Top Speed	162.03mph



Fill the LCD blocks to the redline for fun. And lots of it



Clean, simple, effective. Kawasaki's current bikes aren't this neat



Radial calipers had been seen in the bigger classes, but not on a 600 - petal discs, too

cracks the 160mph mark. This was the last of the 636cc motors, but Kawasaki kept on giving. Oval sub throttles enabled the flow of air to be increased by 20 per cent without needing to make the motor wider. This was a production bike first, not just a middleweight landmark.

The dual injector set-up with a bank in the airbox also increased efficiency and power, while the race kit cams from '03 came free on the C1. This all adds up to 110bhp at the rear wheel and what's still a very surprising spread of power for a '600'. It was also built before the craze for close ratio gearing, making it feel even more usable on the open road compared to the latest stuff. Quick roll-on overtakes and clutched up

wheelies have never been so easy on a middleweight. The connection through the throttle was class leading and better than any of the thousands, only the likes of Ducati had more to offer. This made that wide balance point irresistible and this 6R one of the all time great wheelie bikes.

From the frequent kicks in the arse and bruised thumbs that were synonymous with thrashing the B1 on the road, the new softer suspension was far more for forgiving. The balance between grip and control was a match for the mighty Gixer Thou', the bike that eventually beat it to the top step of our Sportsbike of the Year podium in 2005. The steering is still rewarding today. It's light, neutral and hugely

“ The connection through the throttle was class-leading ”

INSURANCE GUIDE

RIDER 1 25 years-old, 3 year's No Claims Bonus, licence held for 6 years, and currently has no points

TPFT	EXCESS	COMP	EXCESS
£242	£350	£378	£350

RIDER 2 35 years-old, 8 year's No Claims Bonus, licence held for 12 years, and currently has no points

TPFT	EXCESS	COMP	EXCESS
£78	£350	£166	£350

Bike: 2005 - £3,800

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AERODYNAMICS

Kawasaki threw the kitchen sink at the 2005 ZX-6R, and that included spending plenty of time in the wind tunnel. The result was a super slippery bike with a staggeringly low drag coefficient that enabled the Kwaker to top 160mph in a straight line. Neat touches like the flush indicators all did their bit to help.

ERGONOMICS

Comfort levels are decent for such an out-and-out race-rep. The pre-636 ZX's had a reputation for being big and comfy, and there remains an element of this in the 2005 version. This, combined with the massively flexible motor, makes it a great choice for road work, even if it want you to stick your chin on the tank.

STEERING DAMPER

If there's one thing missing from the ZX-6R's massive spec list, then it's a steering damper. Given the experience of the flap-happy 2004 ZX-10R, you'd have thought it would have been the first thing on, so look for any used model with a damper on so you don't have to add that to your wish list.

EXHAUST

This was back in the day when underseat pipes were the in thing, the thought being it made turn-in quicker. However it helped, the end result was a magnificently tidy bike with one of the neatest back ends you'll ever see. A decent after-market can is worth investing in the free up more pories.

CLUTCH

At the time, Kawasaki produced an RR version for racing that was 599cc. The 2004 version had a slipper clutch and for the 2005 revamp, Kawasaki donated this item to the bike to add refinement to downchanges and increase the spec list of the new bike to make it easier to sell. It worked in both regards.

SWINGARM

Kawasaki played with the frame and geometry of the ZX-6R to make it a proper job. The frame itself was 13mm shorter from the swingarm pivot to the headstock to enable the swingarm to be longer (and braced) to deal with the extra power spat out by the motor. Overall wheelbase was reduced by 10mm.

MOTOR

Kawasaki got a kicking when it boosted capacity to 636cc in 2002, but who cares if this was deemed cheating because the extra cubes turn the bike into a beast. Kawasaki gave the ZX-6R the cams from its race kit, bigger throttle bodies and dual injectors to turn it into a near GSX-R750 rival.

BRAKES

No half-arsed gear here, just top-spec Tokico radial calipers that offer power and control beyond what we were expecting at the time. A pad per piston, the calipers were pushed by a radial master cylinder, demonstrating the investment Kawasaki made into the system. To top everything off, they look mint, too!





Age ain't nothing but a number. A great bike is a great bike regardless of its vintage

RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:

Minor	7,500 miles
Major	26,250 miles

Service cost (main dealer):

Minor	£150.00
Major	£300.00

RH fairing:	£181.09
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RH Engine casing:	£176.25
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Front Brake lever:	£41.90
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► confidence inspiring. On track, with sticky tyres and a few sympathetic clicks to the fork, it always feels bulletproof. The only real difference with today's stuff is the ability to split the damping into high and low speed resulting in an overall finer tune. They are also noticeably lighter. The latest 6R will carry more corner speed, but not by much, and it's less happy on a wet B-road.

The pad-per-piston radial calipers combined with a radial master cylinder give this C1 more than enough braking force for even the most demanding of track addicts, and they feel great. The chassis turns fluidly with them applied and the slipper clutch does a decent job of keeping the rear under control, but

On track it always feels bulletproof

you'll never get into a corner as quick as, say, a new CBR. You'll stay with him all the way down the next straight, though, thanks to the extra 37cc. When you consider this bike was designed six years ago it's amazing we can still talk about it in the same breath as 2010 machines. It's so close on track and some will prefer its calmer nature on the road.

There seems to be lot for sale at the moment, we even found one with only 37 miles on the clock for a smidge over four grand. As far as reliability goes they've been generally very sound. The only consistent issue is with the power valves on bikes that have been ridden all year round. Some have stuck and need the can and CAT to be replaced. Have a check to see it's working when you look at any. It may be a little old for some, but you'll have to spend a lot more money than £3,500 to get something as complete as the C1 ZX-6R.

Verdict 9/10

It's a hardcore, addictive psychopath - we love it

- +
- IMMENSE MOTOR, STUNNING LINES, SOUL
- HARD TO HOLD ON TO, THIN TANK

ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

SUZUKI GSX-R600 2004/05

Private
£3,600

Dealer
£3,600

Why: Like the Kwak it has no real faults and is an excellent all round performer, but looks cheaper and feels a little less refined though

Engine 599cc, I/c, 16v inline four

Power 105bhp @ 13,250rpm

Torque 63Nm @ 11,200rpm



HONDA CBR600RR 2007

Private
£4,400

Dealer
£4,800

Why: It took until 2007 until the CBR could rival the C1, it's a brilliant bike but you'll have to pay a Honda premium for the privilege

Engine 599cc, I/c, 16v inline four

Power 108bhp @ 13,400rpm

Torque 62Nm @ 11,000rpm



YAMAHA YZF-R6 2006

Private
£4,300

Dealer
£4,600

Why: It's significantly more expensive and offers newer technology but it's all a little wasted unless the majority of your riding is track based

Engine 599cc, I/c, 16v inline four

Power 109bhp @ 14,300rpm

Torque 59Nm @ 11,500rpm

